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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000649

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ DEFLECTS FARC AND ELECTION WORRIES WITH ACCUSATIONS

REF: CARACAS 000625

CARACAS 00000649 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Daniel Lawton,
Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During his May 11 "Alo, Presidente" television broadcast, President Chavez tried to deflect concerns about upcoming revelations from the FARC computers and potential state and local election losses with shrill insults and accusations. Chavez said Interpol is putting on "a show" by analyzing the alleged recovered FARC computers. Chavez called Colombian President Uribe a "liar" and accused him of "plotting" a military incident to justify U.S. military intervention. The Venezuelan president also alleged that an opposition separatist plot in western Venezuela has expanded to include states in the east and called German Chancellor Angela Merkel an ideological descendant of Hitler. Chavez currently appears to be increasingly focused on diverting attention, deflecting criticism, and papering over bad news. END SUMMARY.

GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT

¶2. (SBU) During the May 11 broadcast of his weekly television talk show, "Alo Presidente," President Chavez tried to anticipate and minimize the impact of documents from FARC hard drives expected later this month. Calling Interpol "damaged" and in the thrall of the United States, Chavez explained that the computers would show anything the user -- or President Bush -- wanted. He predicted the files would reveal Maracaibo's Chavista mayor Gian Carlo Di Martino giving arms to guerrillas, Defense Minister Briceno running a FARC training camp, and Chavez giving the FARC \$300 million, purchasing cocaine for Fidel Castro and allowing the FARC set up rest and training camps in Venezuela.

THE SOFTER SIDE OF FARC

¶3. (SBU) Chavez revisited the argument that the FARC was not a terrorist organization but a guerrilla movement with a political plan. Chavez admitted that Fidel Castro, his ideological mentor had supported guerrillas in the past but "that was another age." Chavez claims that during his stay at the presidential palace Miraflores he told FARC representative Ivan Marquez that "the political map had changed" and the FARC should "consider putting down their arms." Chavez added he wished he could sit with FARC chief Marulanda and tell him "don't come asking for rifles." Chavez accused Uribe of rejecting peace and answering any FARC overture with an artillery barrage because his U.S. masters want to control the world through war and instability.

BAD NEIGHBORS

¶4. (SBU) Chavez also lambasted the USG and the Colombian government. He repeated the accusation that Colombia possessed neither the military technology nor experience to carry out the March 1 attack in Ecuador and asserted that U.S. war planes, guided by the FOB in Manta, Ecuador, carried out the attack. Calling the GOC a "rancid oligarchy" of "narco-paramilitaries," he accused the Colombia of using paramilitaries as a fifth column to divide Venezuela's military, intelligence services and popular movements. Chavez warned his generals that Uribe and Colombian defense minister Santos were taking orders from the Pentagon and that Colombia would start a military incident giving an excuse for the U.S. to invade Venezuela. Chavez cited the U.S. Congress' postponement of a vote on the U.S.-Colombia free trade agreement as evidence of Uribe's lack of credibility. Reacting to local media reports that Merkel tacitly criticized Chavez, the Venezuelan president called Merkel the ideological descendant of Hitler.

THE EASTERN FRONT

¶5. (SBU) Chavez also embellished his previous warnings of a U.S.-backed secessionist movement in the western states of Zulia, Merida, Apure, Barinas and Tachira (Reftel). He said the plot had expanded to the eastern states of Monagas, Nueva Sparta, Sucre and Bolivar. Drawing with a felt pen on a map of Venezuela, he claimed the U.S. is trying to encircle his government. Chavez ran though a laundry list of states and municipalities where he saw the opposition conspiring with the U.S. "empire" to stop his Bolivarian revolution. Chavez called on his supporters to defend their benefits, specifically the various social programs ("misiones"), such as the Mercal subsidized food stores, the Barrio Adentro

CARACAS 00000649 002.2 OF 002

medical plan, and the PDVAL food distribution network.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Chavez seems more and more rattled and agitated in recent speeches, especially during his May 11 "Alo, Presidente" broadcast. The anticipation of the release of the Interpol analysis of the FARC computers combined with real electoral concerns about his party's prospects in the November state and local elections appear to be wearing on Chavez. Indeed, the revelation of compelling evidence of a direct link between Chavez' administration and the FARC, which most Venezuelans still perceive negatively, might exacerbate Chavez' electoral problems, particularly in western Venezuela.

¶7. (C) The embattled Chavez appears to be lashing out and inventing conspiracies once again as a means to galvanize his base. Opposition groups also claim he may be preparing the justification for a postponement of the November 23 gubernatorial and mayoral races, should his new United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) experience continued internal divisions and organizational problems in the run-up to November. Chavez is likely to continue his rhetorical outbursts if Interpol "certifies" the integrity of the Reyes' computers and as more embarrassing evidence of BRV-FARC ties is released to the public.

DUDDY